



Adaptability

Age range: 11-19

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



Session overview

Time	Key learning outcomes	Resources
35-50 mins	By the end of the activity students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand why adaptability is a core skill for the future world of work Identify the traits, skills and characteristics that make someone adaptable Understand that adaptability skills can be developed by anyone and be applied in many situations – not just at moments of major change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptability student worksheet Adaptability presentation slides

Remember that you can refer to the guiding principles for establishing a safe learning environment in the Appendix section of the LifeSkills content guide. This includes suggestions for signposting students to further support. The content guide can be downloaded [here](#).

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Summary	5 mins	12

1 The skills companies need most in 2020 – and how to learn them, LinkedIn, 2020

2 Which Divergent Thinking Index Is More Associated With Problem Finding Ability? The Role of Flexibility and Task Nature

Introduction to transferable skills

Economic, societal and technological forces are changing the world of work, and skills like staying positive (resilience), problem solving, creativity and leadership are becoming increasingly valuable to employers. Your students may already possess some of these core transferable skills but by improving them and developing others, they can be better prepared for the future workplace. By delivering each of the skill-based lessons in this suite you can encourage growth in all these areas or focus in on the ones your students need most.

- If this is the first LifeSkills lesson you have delivered with this group start by showing students **slide 2** which features each of the core transferable skills at the heart of the programme. Go through each skill and ask students if they can offer definitions (provided below), examples of these skills in action or explain how they might work together, for example being proactive to solve a problem
- If you have already introduced all these skills to the group and why they are all important, move on to the next step to explore the specific skill for this lesson in more detail. Use **slide 3** to focus in on the skill of adaptability and explain how the activities in this lesson help them work towards specific steps of the Skills Builder Framework

Core transferable skills



Problem solving skills are about the ability to find a solution to a complex situation or challenge, often using analytical thinking to come up with a methodical approach or break a problem down into parts



Creativity is the use of imagination and the generation of new ideas, and building the confidence to improve these ideas on your own and by collaborating with others



Listening and speaking (communication) is about receiving and retaining information, persuading and influencing others, and using critical thinking skills to evaluate different perspectives



Leadership is about recognising your own strengths in order to best support, encourage and motivate others to achieve a shared goal



Aiming high (being proactive) is the ability to set clear goals and prioritise tasks to achieve them, as well identifying when to take the initiative instead of reacting to external event



Staying positive (resilience) is about the ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals



Adaptability is about the ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals



Teamwork is an important skills used when working with another person, or people in a group

Introduction to transferable skills

- The Skills Builder Framework, developed by the Skills Builder Partnership, provides a shared language and common expectations for eight essential skills: Listening; Speaking; Problem Solving; Creativity; Staying Positive; Aiming High; Leadership; Teamwork. LifeSkills content on transferable skills can be used to support a young person's progression through each of the essential skills, providing a relatable, real-world employability context and this relationship is indicated in brackets above
- LifeSkills lessons always include the opportunity for young people to work in groups and share ideas, as well as providing context for the importance of effective teamwork in the workplace



Optional

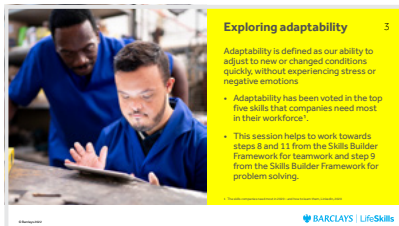
The Skills Builder Framework provides measurable steps for eight essential skills and can be used in combination with this lesson to support your students' progress.

Skills Builder also offer a student Self-Assessment Tool, which helps learners to reflect on their own skill strengths and areas for development. This and other resources can be accessed on the Skills Builder Hub (skillsbuilder.org/hub).

Activity one

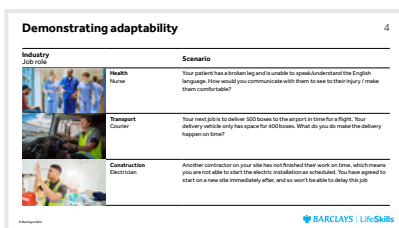
Exploring adaptability (11-19)

1. Discuss what adaptability is



- Using **slide 3**, introduce what we mean by adaptability and why it is important in the workplace:
 - Adaptability is defined as our ability to adjust to new or changed conditions quickly, without experiencing stress or negative emotions
 - Adaptability has been voted in the top five skills that companies need most in their workforce.
- Discuss with the class why they think employers place such importance on adaptability and encourage them to consider:
 - How work and workplaces are becoming more flexible and varied, which means being able to adapt to these changes well is a core skill for the future workplace. For example: freelance and contract work; remote working; shared workspaces
 - How adaptability supports other skills like communication and resilience, depending on the situation

2. Discuss what divergent thinking is



- In pairs or small groups, ask students to imagine themselves in the job role scenarios on **slide 4** and discuss how they could adapt to deliver a suitable outcome
 - Thinking back to the earlier discussion, encourage them to think about the other skills needed in each scenario to enable them to adapt (e.g. communication)

Industry: Health

Job role: Nurse

Scenario: Your patient has a broken leg and is unable to speak/understand the English language. How would you communicate with them to see to their injury / make them comfortable?

Adaptation challenge (optional): You cannot use a translation tool online

Industry: Transport

Job role: Courier

Scenario: Your next job is to deliver 500 boxes to the airport in time for a flight. Your delivery vehicle only has space for 400 boxes. What do you do make the delivery happen on time?

Adaptation challenge (optional): You cannot deliver on another day. You do not have time to do 2 trips

Industry: Construction

Job role: Electrician

Scenario: Another contractor on your site has not finished their work on time, which means you are not able to start the electric installation as scheduled. You have agreed to start on a new site immediately after, and so won't be able to delay this job

Adaptation challenge (optional): You cannot hire more staff in order to do the work more quickly, due to the size of the work area

Activity one

Exploring adaptability (11-19) (cont'd)

- Offer these potential outcomes as prompts, if necessary

Industry: Health

Job role: Nurse

Scenario: Your patient has a broken leg and is unable to speak/understand the English language. How would you communicate with them to see to their injury / make them comfortable?

Potential outcome (not in slides): Use body language to communicate actions you will take to support the patient

Skills Builder Framework:

Speaking step 6: I speak effectively by using appropriate tone, expression and gesture

Listening step 6: I show I am listening by how I use eye contact and body language

Industry: Transport

Job role: Courier

Scenario: Your next job is to deliver 500 boxes to the airport in time for a flight. Your delivery vehicle only has space for 400 boxes. What do you do make the delivery happen on time?

Potential outcome (not in slides): Communicate with a fellow delivery driver to ask if they can support you with the delivery

Skills Builder Framework:

Speaking step 10: I speak adaptively by changing my language, tone and expression depending on the response of listeners

Industry: Construction

Job role: Electrician

Scenario: Another contractor on your site has not finished their work on time, which means you are not able to start the electric installation as scheduled. You have agreed to start on a new site immediately after, and so won't be able to delay this job

Potential outcome (not in slides): You subcontract out the other client to another contractor, and negotiate a higher fee for the rushed work and inconvenience to cover costs

Skills Builder Framework:

Speaking step 13: I speak influentially by changing the structure of my points to best persuade the listeners

Listening step 8: I show I am listening by summarising or rephrasing what I have heard

Activity one

Exploring adaptability (11-19) (cont'd)

3. Adaptability examples

- Ask students to come up with scenarios that require adaptability and can happen in their lives at school (or work/sporting team/at home) and write them on the board
- Examples to start the conversation: Moving to a new house; gaining a new team-mate; starting at a new school; having to get to school in a new way e.g. from car to public transport

4. Putting adaptability into practise

- Next ask students to come up with one way in which they could:
 1. Practice the skill of adaptability at the start of the next school term, or next time they join a new team or club
 2. Use the skill of adaptability to succeed in an interview for work experience or a job
 3. Include an example of a time when they used adaptability skills on their CV
- This activity aligns with steps 6, 10 and 13 of the Skills Builder Framework for speaking, and steps 6 and 8 for listening

5. Support students to reflect on what they have learned

Use the questions below to support students reflect and embed what they have learned.

What does positive body language look like?

How do tone, expression and gesture work together to affect the meaning of what is said?

How can you use them to make your speaking engaging?

How can you adapt your language, tone and expression to your audience's reaction?

What is the difference between influencing and negotiating?

What is the effect of positive body language from the person listening to you speak?

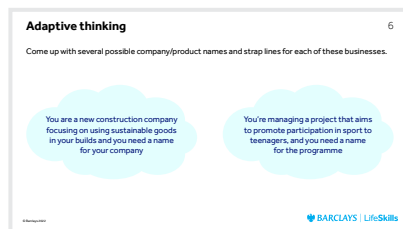
What is the effect of your positive body language on the person you are speaking to?

How would you choose between summarising or rephrasing to show you are listening?

Activity two

Adaptive thinking (11-19)

1. Generate ideas for company/product names



Adaptive thinking

Come up with several possible company/product names and strap lines for each of these businesses.

- You are a new construction company focusing on using sustainable goods in your builds and you need a name for your company
- You're managing a project that aims to promote participation in sport to teenagers, and you need a name for the programme

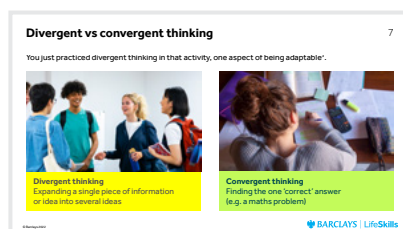
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- Show **slide 6** and distribute the **Company and product names student worksheet**. In groups, ask the students to come up with several possible company/product names and strap lines for the businesses provided on the worksheet. Make sure they come up with several options for each
- Ask the students to discuss the following questions in their groups

1. How did they find this exercise?

2. Did it get easier as they went along? If not, why do you think this was the case?

2. Adapting to job role scenarios



Divergent vs convergent thinking

You just practiced divergent thinking in that activity, one aspect of being adaptable.

- Divergent thinking**
Expanding a single piece of information or idea into several ideas
- Convergent thinking**
Finding the one 'correct' answer (e.g. a maths problem)

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- Show **slide 7** and introduce the idea of divergent thinking, which this activity encouraged them to practice, and which research suggests in one aspect of being adaptable and flexible
- Divergent thinking involves taking a single idea or piece of information and expanding it out into several ideas
- Explain that we more often practice something known as convergent thinking, which focuses more on finding one 'correct' answer to things, like a maths problem. Because divergent thinking is the opposite of that, sometimes this exercise is quite difficult, and some students will struggle with it more than others
- Further explain that practising divergent thinking will help them respond when convergent thinking doesn't work, like perhaps they've got a maths question wrong and need to consider alternative ways to solve it
- In a work environment, it's often necessary to be flexible and adapt to tackle a problem from multiple angles or consider new ways to do things. Whether you're taking on a new project, working with a new team of people or need to find a solution to a setback you've faced, applying the principles of divergent thinking will help you be more productive and adaptable in these situations
- Encourage students to think about how they can apply this divergent thinking activity to school projects, perhaps when titling a piece of work, or starting a new project

Activity two

Adaptive thinking (11-19) (cont'd)

3. Discuss other key skills students need to have

Help students understand how adaptability is a skill that you need to have alongside skills like problem solving and teamwork by asking them these questions.

Why might you need to encourage others to contribute their ideas?

How can you build relationships?

How might being adaptable help you maintain those relationships over time?

How can being adaptable help you come up with a range of solutions?

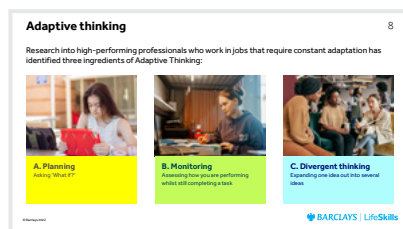
Why is it important to consider a range of problems when solving a complex problem?

- This activity aligns with steps 8 and 11 of the Skills Builder Framework for teamwork, and step 9 for problem solving

Activity two

Adaptive thinking (16-19)

1. Discuss the ingredients of adaptive thinking



Following on from the previous activity, with an older or more able group, continue to discuss divergent thinking in more detail by introducing the following concepts.

- Research shows that employers think adaptability continues to be an important skill in their companies
- To help us identify what behaviour contributes to adaptability, there are three primary components or ingredients of Adaptive Thinking

Activity two

Adaptive thinking (16-19) (cont'd)

- Explain the ingredients of Adaptive Thinking to the group, as per **slide 8**:
 - a) **Planning:** Thinking about what could happen unexpectedly in a situation, asking 'what if', which can help you be more prepared if/when things do come up
 - b) **Monitoring:** How are you doing? Have you ever noticed that it's hard to assess how you are performing on a task whilst still completing it? Suggest students think about the last time they focussed very hard on something using all their brainpower, just for a short period of time. It was hard, and tiring wasn't it? We can practise doing this to ensure our brains become more used to working as hard as it can, at first for short amounts of time, then gradually building up
 - c) **Divergent thinking:** Practicing divergent thinking involves taking a single idea and expanding it out into lots of different ideas, and the various ways to do things, enabling you to accommodate unexpected changes in your environment
- Remember to emphasise it's not just fighter pilots and doctors who need to quickly adapt at work. Divergent thinking can help with creative conundrums and thinking on your feet in any job, from a shop to a building site or an office. Divergent thinking tests, like the one they've just done, measure a lot of different things including how flexible and adaptable they are, and whether they're able to see situations from multiple perspectives

2. Putting adaptive thinking into practise

- Distribute **The three ingredients of adaptive thinking student worksheet**
- Ask the students to imagine they are launching a new app for students to help with budgeting during their first year at university/college and complete the sheet. This activity will require them to practice the three ingredients of adaptive thinking
- Optional: If necessary, use 1-2 of these examples as prompts for the 'think divergently' aspect of this task. Examples: A customer who's financially independent and working to support themselves while studying; a customer who's living with their parents working a few hours a week; a customer who's got dependent(s) and studies part-time
- Ask the students to once again discuss the following questions in their groups

1. How did they find this exercise?

2. Did it get easier as they went along? If not, why do they think this was the case?

3. How could they apply this activity at school, for example in a piece of coursework?

Activity three

Real world adaptability (11-19)

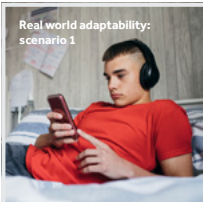
1. Discuss real-world adaptability case studies

- Introduce at least one of the following real-world case studies (where relevant to the age group) to provoke discussion about adapting well and less well, and the range of situations that can require adaptability from young people
- Ask the class to discuss in groups of three what they'd do in the situation to avoid negative outcomes or stress before sharing the suggested responses below

What technique could they apply if the plan they've mapped out in advance doesn't play out that way?

How would they feel, how could they adapt?

Real world adaptability: scenario 1



Joe's parents have decided to move to a new house during the school holidays, but he's going to keep attending the same school. The new house is closer to a train station, meaning his parents will no longer drive him to school and he'll be getting the train. He must reorganise his mornings, figure out what time to get up and how long it takes to walk to the station from his house.

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For 11-14

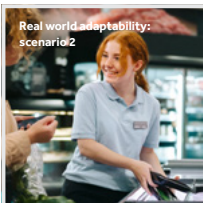
Scenario: Joe's parents have decided to move to a new house during the school holidays, but he's going to keep attending the same school. The new house is closer to a train station, meaning his parents will no longer drive him to school and he'll be getting the train. He must reorganise his mornings, figure out what time to get up and how long it takes to walk to the station from his house.

Responses are on **slide 10**

Response 1: Joe goes for a walk to the station while on holiday, so he knows the way and how long it takes him. He also decides to start taking breakfast with him and eat it on the train, so that he doesn't have to get up any earlier.

Response 2: Joe uses his phone to see how long the walk will take, but realises he'll have to leave earlier than usual to make his train, he skips breakfast. His school bag is heavy so he takes longer than thought, and he must run for the train.

Real world adaptability: scenario 2



Evie is working in a local shop and receives a call from her boss asking her to switch from her regular Saturday afternoon shift to Sunday morning shift for the next two weeks.

11

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For 14-16

Scenario: Evie is working in a local shop and receives a call from her boss asking her to switch from her regular Saturday afternoon shift to Sunday morning shift for the next two weeks.

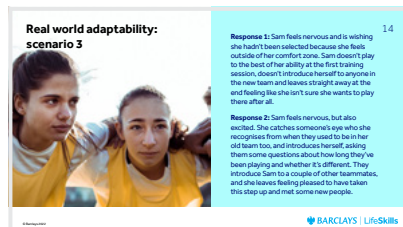
Responses are on **slide 12**

Response 1: She accepts her bosses offer straight away but feels stressed, and sleeps badly the night before her first Sunday shift because she's worried about being late.

Response 2: Evie asks her parents if they'll drive her to work in exchange for her looking after a younger sibling, or cleaning the car. She tells her boss it's ok, but she'd prefer the Saturday shift long term.

Activity three

Real world adaptability (11-19) (cont'd)



For 16-19

Scenario: Sam plays football at a local club and moved up from under 16s to under 18s. Sam's excited because it's a step up that she's been training to be ready for, but is also a bit worried as most of her friends are staying in her old team.

Responses are on **slide 14**

Response 1: Sam feels nervous and outside of her comfort zone. She doesn't play to the best of her ability at the first training session or introduce herself to anyone in the new team, and leaves straight after. She isn't sure she wants to play there after all.

Response 2: Sam feels nervous, but excited. She recognises someone from her old team and introduces herself, asking them some questions about the team. They introduce Sam to a couple of other teammates, and she leaves feeling pleased to have taken this step up.

2. Feeding back to peers

Ask teams the following questions to feedback to the wider class:

How might you choose between different solutions when adapting to a new situation?

Why is it important to consider both the positive and negative effects of possible solutions?

- This activity aligns with step 10 of Skills Builder Framework for problem solving

Summary

- Finish the lesson by encouraging students to start trying out the tips to develop 'adaptability' in their own life. They could try planning and thinking ahead and doing something new, for example an activity or joining a club and really think about how they can make their own experience better before they go ahead
- Suggest content that young people could look at on their own to explore adaptability further, for example
 - Look online for further activities to encourage divergent thinking, such as the Many Uses Challenge, or drama improvisation games
 - Video content that features experts discussing the benefits of being adaptable in the workplace e.g. TED talks

Adaptability

Company and product names

Come up with several possible company/product names and strap lines for each of these businesses.



You are a new construction company focusing on using sustainable goods in your builds and you need a name for your company



You're managing a project that aims to promote participation in sport to teenagers, and you need a name for the programme



Adaptability

The three ingredients of adaptive thinking

You are launching a new app for students to help them with budgeting during their first year at University/College.

Ingredient

Working space

Plan

Create a simple plan for design, build and launch. What could happen at each point. Come up with a few likely problematic scenarios and think about how you'd solve them.

Monitor

Make sure you allow time to assess how you're performing, both personally and as a team, even in busy periods. Could you communicate better, or streamline processes?

Think divergently

Come up with ten different possible customers who your app might be for. Consider different ways it might be used by different people.
